Enid Blyton

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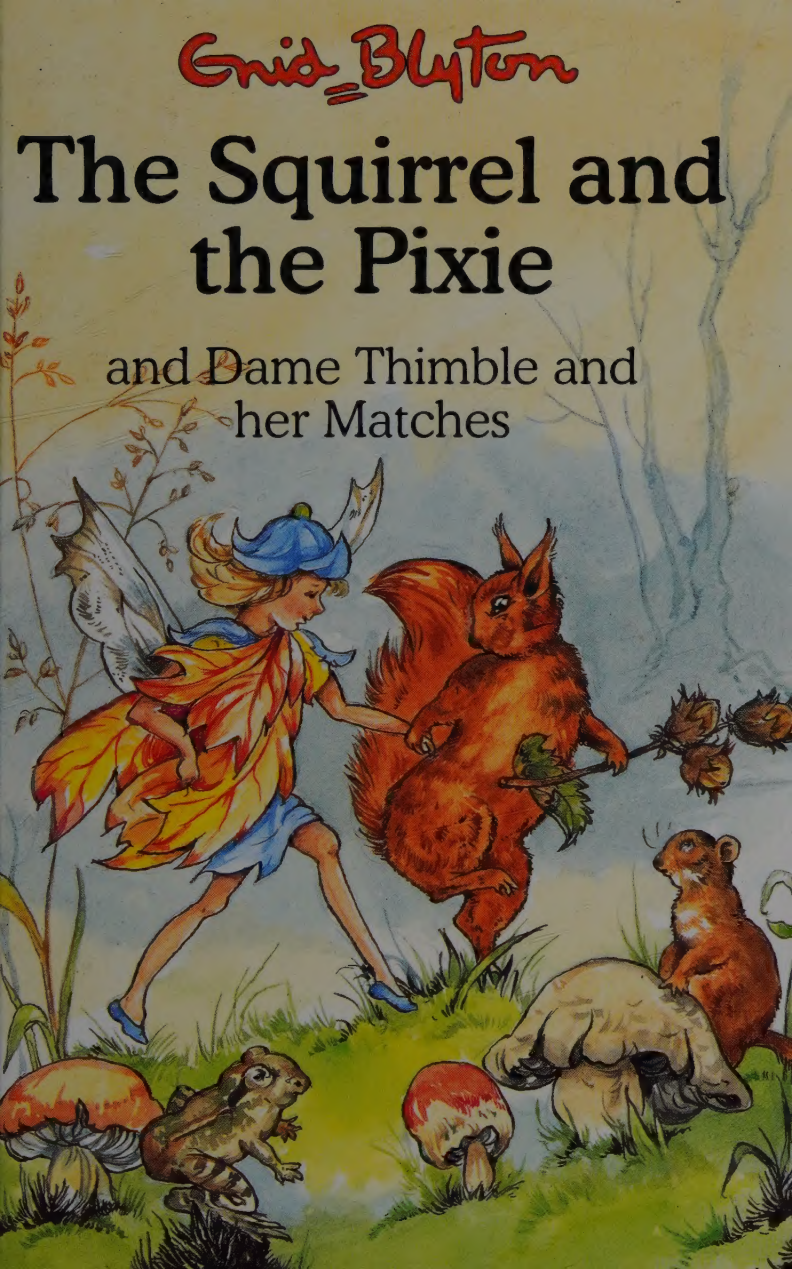
and Dame Thimble and her Matches



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The Squirrel and the Pixie

There was once a pixie called Goldie because of her shining yellow hair. All the summer she played with the swallows in the air, and when they flew away in October she was sad.

'The cold days are coming,' twittered the swallows to her. 'We must go. You cannot come with us, Goldie, because your wings could not fly so far. Why do you not sleep through the cold days as many of the other creatures do?'

'I think I will,' said Goldie. So she set about making herself some warm rugs and blankets, a warm dress and a warm cloak.

'Then I shall be able to sleep in comfort,' she told a spider who was watching her. 'I shall roll myself up in all these warm clothes and sleep until the spring, just as you do, Spider.'

She made her blankets of rose-petals, sewn neatly together. She made her rugs

of the thistledown that she gathered from the thistles – it looked like a furry cover when she had finished it. She sewed herself a dress and a coat of crimson creeper leaves, and she did look nice in them.

Then she went to find a place to sleep in. She chose a nice cosy corner at the bottom of some Michaelmas daisies. They waved their pretty daisy-heads far above her. She smiled at them.

'You will shelter me when it rains,' she said. Then she curled herself up in her new rugs and went to sleep.

But alas for poor Goldie! In a few days' time, the gardener came along and cut down all the Michaelmas daisies! They were fading, and he wanted to make the garden tidy.

He very nearly trod on Goldie. She woke up in a great fright and flew away, leaving behind her beautiful warm rugs and blankets. She saw them all put into the gardener's barrow and wheeled away to be burnt on the bonfire. She was very unhappy.

'I am so cold,' she shivered. 'I shall not be able to make any more covers. I shall freeze to death at night!'

A small red squirrel bounded over to her. 'Why are you crying?' he asked. Goldie told him.

'Well, why don't you go and cuddle up to one of the little animals who sleep the winter days away?' he asked her. 'They usually have plenty of moss and dead leaves for blankets, or at any rate some sort of shelter from winter storms.'

'That's a very good idea,' said Goldie, cheering up. 'But where shall I find anybody? I don't know where to look.'

'Oh, I'll soon show you one or two,' said the squirrel. 'First of all, come and see the nice cosy hole that the hedgehog is sleeping in. He always makes himself very comfortable for the winter.'

Goldie took the squirrel's paw and he led her to a little hole in a dry bank. He pushed aside a mossy curtain and Goldie slipped inside. She saw a big, brown prickly hedgehog there, fast asleep, curled up warmly on some dead leaves.

She came out of the hole again and shook her head. 'No, dear squirrel,' she said, 'I don't want to sleep with the hedgehog. He is so prickly that I couldn't cuddle up to him – and besides, he snores! Take me somewhere else.'

'Well, I'll take you to the toad,' said the squirrel. 'He always chooses a good, sheltered place.'

So he took the pixie to a big mossy stone, and told her to creep underneath it. There she found the old toad sleeping soundly, quite safe and cosy under the stone. But Goldie crept out again, shivering.

'He has no blankets to cover himself,' she said. 'And it is damp under there. I wouldn't like to sleep there.'

'Well, come where the bat lives,' said the squirrel. 'They sleep very soundly indeed.' So he took her to an old cave and showed her the black bats hanging upside down around the cave. But Goldie screwed up her little nose and ran outside the cave.

'They smell,' she said. 'I couldn't possibly sleep with the bats.'

The squirrel thought for a moment. 'You might like to cuddle in a heap with the snakes,' he said. 'They have chosen a good hollow tree this winter, and they are so comfortable there. Come along. I'll show you.'

But when Goldie peeped inside the hollow tree and saw the snakes all twisted up together, she shook her head at once.

'No,' she said. 'I wouldn't dare to sleep with the snakes! See how they have twisted themselves together. Squirrel! They might squeeze me to bits if they twisted round me too! No! Show me someone else, please.'

'You are very hard to please, Goldie,' said the squirrel, thinking hard. 'There's the dormouse – he has quite a nice winter nest in the roots of the old fir tree. Would you like to go there?'

'Oh, I don't think so,' said Goldie. 'It sounds too stuffy to me. What about *you*, Squirrel? Where do *you* sleep?'

'Oh, I sleep in a hole in a tree, and am very cosy,' said the squirrel. 'But I don't sleep all the winter through, you know. I wake up when we get warm days and I go out and have a play. I eat a few of my nuts too. I hide them away so that I can have a feast in the warm winter days – we do get

quite nice sunny days sometimes, you know, and I always think it's such a pity to sleep through those.'

'I agree with you!' cried Goldie joyfully. 'I'd like to wake up sometimes too, and have a feast of nuts.'

'The only thing is – I often forget where I hide my nuts,' said the squirrel. 'I'd love to have you share my sleeping hole, Goldie, if you'd help me to hunt for my nuts when we wake.'

'I'll help you, I'll help you!' cried Goldie. 'Now, show me where you sleep, Squirrel.'

So he showed her his warm, sheltered hole in the oak tree, and together they curled up there, warm and happy. Goldie cuddled right into the squirrel's lovely fur, and it was just like a cosy rug.

'I'm so happy,' she said sleepily. 'This is better than squeezing in with the snakes – or getting a cold under the toad's stone – or hanging upside down with the bats! Good night, dear Squirrel! Sleep tight!'

They did – and on the first warm winter days they will wake, and you may see them hunting for the nuts that the squirrel so carefully hid away in October. If you see him, look out for Goldie – she is very much better at finding the nuts than he is!

Dame Thimble and Her Matches

There was once an old woman called Dame Thimble who lit her lamp as soon as it got dark each night. And every night she had to hunt for her matches.

Sometimes they were on the mantelpiece, sometimes they were on the dresser, sometimes they were in the kitchen drawer and most often they were in the cupboard.

But, of course, it is hard to find matches when it is dark, and Dame Thimble bumped herself so often trying to find them that she decided to do something about it.

'I'll put them in my pocket in the morning,' she said, 'then when the evening comes I shall just have to put my hand in my pocket, and there I shall find the matches as easily as anything! I can light my lamp at once without hunting all over the place first!'

So in the morning she put the matches in her pocket, and then busied herself with her day's washing and ironing. She

worked hard until tea-time, when she sat down and had a nice cup of tea. After tea she had to wash up, and as it was getting very dark by then, she wanted to light her lamp.

So she went to the cupboard to find her matches. They weren't there. Then she went to the kitchen dresser, but they weren't there either. Then she felt all along the mantelpiece and bumped her head on the corner of the bookcase nearby. But still she could find no matches.

'They must be in the kitchen drawer!' she said, and off she went to look there, treading on the cat on her way, poor thing, and bumping her knee against the stool. There were no matches in the drawer, though Dame Thimble felt at the back as well as at the front.

'I'll go and ask Mr Todd if he'll lend me a box,' she said at last. 'I can't *think* where mine are!'

So off she went next door to Mr Todd's. He opened the door to Dame Thimble, and when he heard that she wanted some matches, he nodded his head.

'Yes, Dame Thimble, I will lend you some, but would you mind doing something for me in return? Would you go along the lane to the Bee-Woman's and ask her for a pot of her honey? She said she would give me one today.'

'Certainly,' said Dame Thimble. So down the lane she went until she came to the Bee-Woman's hive-shaped cottage. She knocked at the door and the Bee-Woman opened it.

'Could you let me have the pot of honey you promised Mr Todd?' asked Dame Thimble.

'Oh, yes,' said the Bee-Woman. 'But I'll have to climb to my top shelf and get it. Would you go and ask Tompkins the cat who lives next door, to lend me his new ladder? Mine is broken.'

'Very well,' said the old dame, with a sigh, and off she went next door. Tompkins the cat opened the door to her and listened to what she wanted.

'Yes,' he said. 'I will lend the Bee-Woman my ladder, but I shall want something in return. Would you go down the lane and over the hill to where Diddle the brownie lives and beg him to let me have a little of his fresh butter. I've quite run out of it today.'

'I suppose I must,' said Dame Thimble, beginning to feel very tired. 'I won't be long. Goodbye.'

She walked all the way down the lane and over the hill to Diddle the Brownie's. She told him that Tompkins the cat had sent her to borrow a little fresh butter, and Diddle promised to get it from his dairy.

'Whilst I'm getting it, would you mind just popping next door to get a paper bag for it?' said Diddle. 'I haven't one.'

So Dame Thimble popped next door, and got a big paper bag from Twinkle the pixie, who, strangely enough, didn't want anything done in return!

Diddle put the butter into the paper bag and Dame Thimble took it, walked over the hill and up the lane, and at last came to the cottage of Tompkins the cat.

He had fetched his ladder and he gave it to Dame Thimble. She took it to the Bee-Woman, and helped her to raise it up to her top shelf. The Bee-Woman took down a small jar of honey from the shelf and handed it to Dame Thimble.

Then the old woman hurried to Mr Todd's cottage, and gave him the honey.

'Now, will you lend me some matches, Mr Todd?' she asked. 'I really must have some to light my lamp.'

'Well, it's a funny thing now, but I can't seem to find my matches,' said Mr Todd. 'They're in the bedroom somewhere. Let's go and look for them together, Dame Thimble. I'll take my kitchen candle with me.'

So they went together into the bedroom, Mr Todd carrying his candle – but just as they entered the room the draught blew out the candle! And there they both were in the darkness!

'Well, *now* we're in a fix!' cried Mr Todd. 'We shall go bumping into everything. Oh, dear, where can those matches be? We can't see to look for anything now, it's such a nuisance. We can't even light the candle till we've got some matches.'

Now at that very moment Dame Thimble put her hand in her pocket, and was delighted to feel a box of matches there! She took them out and struck one.

'Look, I've some matches in my pocket, Mr Todd! Now we can light the candle and hunt properly.'

So they hunted with the lighted candle, but could not find the matches anywhere. Mr Todd got quite hot and bothered, and he took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead – and out of his pocket fell – a box of matches!

'Oh, there they are!' he cried. 'They were in my pocket all the time!'

'You stupid, silly creature!' cried Dame Thimble, quite losing her temper. 'Here

I've been going down on my hands and knees, poking in all the dusty corners of your bedroom and you had them in your pocket all the time! You are a big stupid, the biggest I've ever met. Fancy hunting all over the place for matches when they were in your pocket all the time! Why you didn't look there first I can't think! If I hadn't had my *matches* with me we couldn't even have lit your candle!'

Mr Todd wiped his forehead and looked at Dame Thimble.

'Well,' he said, 'if you had your matches in your pocket all the time, why did you come here to borrow mine?'

Dame Thimble stared at Mr Todd. Dear me, what a very peculiar thing! Here she had been scolding him for doing exactly what she had done herself! She

had popped her matches safely in her pocket so that she might find them easily, and then she had hunted all over her own cottage for them . . . which was just what Mr Todd had done. And she had called him stupid and silly, when she was just as bad herself!

'Oh my, oh my!' she groaned, sinking down into a chair, 'I'm much sillier than you, Mr Todd. I've fetched honey from the Bee-Woman, a ladder from Tompkins the cat, a pat of butter from Diddle, and a paper bag from his next-door neighbour – and all because I didn't look in my pocket for my matches. I could cry, really I could!'

'No, don't do that,' said Mr Todd kindly. 'Stay to supper with me instead, and we'll have hot cocoa and new bread and honey. You'd like that. We're two foolish people, so we ought to get on very well, and understand one another nicely.'

So down they sat to hot cocoa and new bread and honey, and the very next week they got married – all because of a box of matches. Well, well, strange things do happen, don't they?

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